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Summary record of the 18th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 29 May 2014, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Drobnjak (Vice-President) ..... (Croatia)

Contents

Sustainable urbanization (*continued*)

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In the absence of Mr. Sajdik (Austria), Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Sustainable urbanization (*continued*)

Thematic discussion on "Effective governance, policymaking and planning for sustainable urbanization" (E/2014/67)

1. **Mr. Hanif** (Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on effective governance, policymaking and planning for sustainable urbanization (E/2014/67), said that current urbanization trends had made effective urban management an urgent priority. Meeting the needs of fast-growing urban populations without exhausting natural resources posed great challenges to municipal and national governments, particularly in developing countries. Municipal governments, regardless of their particular economic and political context, were responsible for ensuring that the economic and social opportunities offered by the modern city were accompanied by adequate infrastructure, housing, social services, employment, security and environmental protection for all residents.

2. Rapid urbanization and globalization were expanding the influence that cities exerted on both national economies and the global economy. Urban management increasingly required coordination with higher tiers of government and engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. The concept of urban governance had evolved in response to the growing complexity of the urban environment, the impact of which went well beyond the capacities, responsibilities and authority of municipal governments. Indeed, effective governance had become central to promoting sustainable cities, regardless of the local circumstances or priorities.

3. National and municipal governments around the world had been experimenting with a variety of governance models and policy and planning approaches. One common aim was to address the growing demographic, socio-spatial, economic and institutional challenges of urban transformation in a balanced manner that responded to the priorities and needs of present and future generations. Although some degree of success had been achieved, there were a number of structural barriers to a more integrated management of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of urban transformation, including fragmented decision-making, competing policy objectives, limited coordination with higher tiers of government and inadequate resources.

4. The report of the Secretary-General concluded that in order to be effective, governance models and planning tools needed to take into account the expanding scope and impact of urban activities across policy areas and spatial boundaries. Governance models must also deploy innovative strategies and instruments so as to mobilize, manage and coordinate the capacities and resources of a wide range of urban stakeholders. A number of critical features and policy approaches had emerged from current practices. For example, a whole-of-government approach was needed to help address complex urban challenges more holistically and identify policy trade-offs and synergies within different activities. In addition, inclusive and participatory mechanisms for decision-making were critical to ensuring that the needs of all social groups were taken into account in setting urban priorities.

5. Strong partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations, and a clear definition of their roles in implementing urban strategies and delivering services, were important mechanisms to harness their strengths and capacities. Policy initiatives should also consider effective coordination between national and local interventions, which would ensure greater policy coherence and more efficient use of resources. Strong leadership and accountability in the delivery of public services could be enhanced through a clear division of responsibilities among local authorities, and between local and national authorities. Effective consultative mechanisms were also needed in order to engage the broad range of urban stakeholders and actors involved in service delivery to ensure that the economic, social and environmental dimensions were fully integrated. Lastly, innovative procedures and approaches, including through information and communication technologies, could help address capacity gaps and promote more effective decision-making and delivery of services.

6. *A panel discussion, moderated by Mr. Berry Vrbanovic (Vice-President, Federation of Canadian Municipalities; Councillor of Kitchener, Canada; and Deputy Treasurer of United Cities and Local Governments), followed. The panellists were Ms. Angela Brown-Burke (Mayor of Kingston, Jamaica);*

Mr. Hassan Radoine (Central Director of Architecture and Urban Planning, Ministry of Urban and Territorial Planning, Morocco); and Ms. Clara Irazábal Zurita (Director, Latin Lab, and Assistant Professor of Urban Planning, Columbia University). The panellists made statements and an interactive discussion ensued, during which the panellists responded to comments and questions from the moderator; representatives of the non-governmental organizations New Future Foundation and Women's Environment and Development Organization, in consultative status with the Council; an invited representative of the non-governmental organization Global Urban Development; and invited representatives of York University, Canada, and Cornell University, United States of America. The Founder and President of the Mega-Cities Project, Ms. Janice Perlman, also participated in the interactive discussion.

7. *A panel discussion, moderated by Mr. Urs Gauchat (Dean of the College of Architecture and Design, New Jersey Institute of Technology; and Founding Director, Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization) was held. The panellists were Mr. Lance Brown (President, American Institute of Architects (New York Chapter); and Founding Director, Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization); Ms. Janice Perlman (Founder and President, Mega-Cities Project); Ms. Kalpana Viswanath (Founder, Safetipin); and Ms. Rose Molokoane (Coordinator, Slum Dwellers International). The panellists made statements and an interactive discussion ensued, during which the panellists responded to comments and questions from the moderator; a representative of the non-governmental organization New Future Foundation, in consultative status with the Council; and an invited representative of the non-governmental organization Professional Alliance for Technology & Habitat (PATH).*

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.